OCTOBER 2025

Rock Talk

The Official Newsletter of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds

RAINBOW OPAL

Rainbow opals are gemstones renowned for their captivating play of colors, making them highly prized in the world of gemology and jewelry. These opals exhibit a stunning array of hues that seem to dance and shift as the gemstone is viewed from different angles. This optical phenomenon, known as play of color, occurs due to the diffraction of light within the microstructure of the opal, which consists of tiny silica spheres stacked in a regular pattern.

Rainbow opals belong to the broader category of precious opals, distinguished by their ability to display iridescent colors. This unique feature arises from the silica spheres that diffract light, causing a spectrum of colors to emerge across the gem's surface. The most sought-after opals exhibit a full spectrum of colors, including red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet, often in mesmerizing patterns. These gemstones are valued not only for their aesthetic appeal but also for their rarity and the intricate geological processes that create them.

Rainbow opals have significant historical and cultural importance, particularly among indigenous Australian communities where opals have been revered for millennia. The Aboriginal people of Australia, for instance, considered opals as sacred stones that were believed to contain the essence of the creator's rainbow. Throughout history, opals have been associated with hope, purity, and good fortune in various cultures around the world. Their popularity surged during the 19th century when Queen Victoria developed a fondness for opals, further elevating their status and desirability in Europe.

This Month's Roundup of Stories

- Rainbow Opal
- Secretary's Report
- Are Opals Bad Luck?
- October 2025 Announcements
- Aquamarine
- Dan Hurd Video
- Jet Stone
- YouTube Channel & Club T-shirts
- Bench Tips

October's Birthstone - Opal

In summary, rainbow opals are not only cherished for their visual splendor but also for their rich cultural heritage and symbolic meanings. Their ability to encapsulate the colors of the rainbow within a single gemstone continues to captivate gem enthusiasts and collectors alike, ensuring their enduring appeal in the realm of precious gemstones.
Read the entire article at *GeologyScience.com*

Secretary's Report

Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson

Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting - Minutes
Date 9-10-2025

The meeting was called to order by President Michael Steverson at 7:10pm.
We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.
There were no new members to recognize.
There was 1 guest in attendance: Valerie Frances
Michele Evans made a motion to accept the minutes of our August meeting as printed in the newsletter. Janice Wojcik seconded. Passed by all members.
Treasurer Janet Wheeler gave the Treasurer's report. Diane Halsey made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report subject to audit. Seconded by Roger Wheeler. Approved by all.
President Steverson began with announcements. "I was asked to make these announcements by Carol Pebbly, the President of the Weeki Wachee Senior Center":
1. We're having a Fall gathering Oct. 18. Sign-ups are on the board.
2. New kitchen coming Oct. 20. The Club will be shut down for 2 weeks.
3. A group of us are going to the Christmas Show Dec. 6th at the Suncoast Broadway Dinner Theater. Sign ups on the board.
President Steverson continued, "these events are for all members of the Senior Center (our clubhouse) and could be a good chance to have fun and meet new people. As for the closing of the clubhouse, that will start on the 2nd Monday after our October meeting, so it will not interfere with our gathering."
Michele Evans stood and announced that she is selling personal items to raise money for a local Charity, "Healing Hope".
We have had more online Gem Show ticket sales. More vendor applications are coming in. Everything is coming together for our 50th anniversary Gem Show.
All members need to volunteer to help during the show to make it a great event!
Diane Hensley made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Hunter Mellring seconded, passed by all.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:36pm.
Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson.

Withlacoochee Rockhounds Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes
Date 9-18-25

Attending Board members: Anthony Maffatone, Michael Steverson, Melodye Steverson, Janet Wheeler, Roger Wheeler, Hunter Mellring and James Roush.

Board meeting started at 6:30 pm and was held via the Internet on Zoom.

Former VP and current Gem Show co-chairman Janice Wojcik joined the board meeting and was accepted on to the Board of Directors as the by-laws state that the Gem Show chairperson will be on the Board of Directors.

President Steverson asked for an update on the planning of the Gem Show and co-chairman Wojcik reported that we have many vendors signed up and have paid their deposits but we were waiting to hear from several more. Hunter Mellring and Moya Laden are in charge of social media this year. They will be doing Facebook boosts on approved posts to reach more potential attendees by the end of the month.

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Are Opals Bad Luck?
Myths Explained

Are opals bad luck? They have long captivated with their fiery colors, but opals have also been called cursed. For centuries, stories and superstitions have painted these gemstones as harbingers of misfortune, discouraging people from wearing them. From literary tales of deadly opal amulets to persistent myths about who should—or shouldn't—wear them, these beliefs have overshadowed the true beauty and energy of the stone. Let's uncover where the myths began and why opals deserve admiration, not fear.

The question, Are opals bad luck, didn't appear out of nowhere. One of the earliest and most influential stories comes from 19th-century literature, where a fiery opal amulet played a central role in a tale of mystery, danger, and mistaken superstition. The story of Hermione, her opal, and the tragic consequences attributed to the stone helped cement opal's reputation as a gem to fear—but the truth is far less sinister.

In the 19th century, Australian opal was gaining popularity, frequently worn by nobility and aristocracy. In 1829, Sir Walter Scott wrote Anne of Geierstein, highlighting a mysterious young woman, Hermione. Set in the Swiss Alps in the 14th century, Hermione was hired by the Baron of Arnheim as a tutor. She wore a fiery red opal set in a gold amulet and strung on a blue ribbon in her hair. The stone seemed to respond to her moods, displaying a dark red when its mistress was in a foul state, even if the stone was in the darkness of an unlit corridor of the old castle. She was never without the opal amulet. On rare occasions when the ribbon was removed, she was apprehensive. She seemed most frightened when she was near the water, afraid the opal might get wet. Uncomfortable with Hermione's eccentricities, local townspeople suspected her of witchcraft.

Hermione and the Baron were married and had a baby girl, Sybilla. When they entered the church for the baby's christening, the Baron reached for the holy water and passed a drop to his lady's finger in blessing. He touched her forehead with the holy water and a droplet landed on the opal. Immediately, a brilliant light flew out of the opal and all the color drained from the gem. The Baroness fainted and was carried back to the castle.

She was laid on her bed in her chamber. The Baron locked the door twice behind him and went to the chapel to pray. Two hours later, the doctor arrived. When the chamber door was opened, Hermione was missing with only a small amount of ash on the bed where she had been. As the book continues, the story is primarily about Hermione's granddaughter, Anne, who is Sybill's daughter. Since Hermione's death, local lore had built her into a supernatural creature. Hermione makes regular appearances as a spirit or spectral figure. Suspicion follows Hermione's family tree and Anne's father is suspected of witchcraft. On the evening before Anne's wedding, Anne is also seen as a ghost on a bridge wearing… an opal pendant.

Read the article at *RockNGem.com*

October 2025 Announcements

Hunter Mellring will start featuring club members who will be vendors at the Gem Show in the club's Facebook posts.
This gets you more visibility, and gets the club increased visibility.
So, for the October meeting, bring a few of the items you will be selling, or be sure to get pictures to Hunter.

Clamoring for Classes!

Club members want more classes, and the Board wants to provide them.

- **We have a Cabochon cutting class ready to go, but only one member signed up.**
- **We have a Resin class in the works, but so far, no interest.**
- **We have the potential for more wire wrapping classes.**
- **And the Silversmithing class is being re-worked and will be going soon.**

All of the classes being offered need to have a minimum of 4 student club members and will need to be paid for in advance.
If you want to take a Cabochon class, text your name, phone number, and day/times you are available to me. 407.760.4472
I will coordinate the class with the students.

Melodye

Jean Casanova has friend whose mother passed away, and is looking to sell the collection of rocks, crystals and more that her mother acquired over the years. Please call Jean to schedule a time to visit her and look through the collection. 352.442.2667
Below are some images of some of the items she has.

Michele Evans has some additional items she is looking to sell.
Below are some of her items. Michele says prices are between $5 to $25.
The amber from Poland will be slightly higher.
See Michele at our next meeting.

Aquamarine: The Ocean's Gem

Aquamarine is a gemstone that has enchanted people for centuries with its delicate shades of blue, reminiscent of crystal-clear ocean waters. Beyond its visual appeal, this remarkable stone has a fascinating origin, deep cultural symbolism, and a place in both history and modern jewelry. Whether sought after for its serene energy or simply for its beauty, aquamarine remains a cherished gemstone worldwide.

Formed deep within the Earth over millions of years, aquamarine is a member of the beryl family, alongside emeralds and morganite. The unique blue-green hues of this gemstone are created by trace amounts of iron, with variations in concentration leading to different shades—ranging from the palest seafoam to deep ocean blue.

Aquamarine is primarily found in pegmatite rocks, where it slowly takes shape under extreme heat and pressure. Some of the world's most prized deposits come from Brazil, Madagascar, Nigeria, and Pakistan. Over time, nature sculpts these stunning crystals, leaving behind breathtaking specimens that eventually make their way into jewelry collections.

For centuries, aquamarine has been linked to the ocean, earning its reputation as a stone of protection and tranquility. Ancient sailors believed it could safeguard them against rough seas and misfortune during voyages. The stone was also considered a symbol of courage, bringing strength and confidence to those who carried it.

Beyond maritime folklore, aquamarine has been associated with clarity, wisdom, and inner peace. Many cultures regarded it as a stone of communication, helping individuals express themselves openly and truthfully. In medieval times, it was even believed to counteract poison, leading some to use it in medicinal elixirs.

Modern crystal healing traditions connect aquamarine to the throat chakra, the energy center linked to speech and expression. It is thought to encourage honesty, reduce stress, and foster calmness in challenging situations. Many believe wearing or carrying aquamarine enhances self-awareness and helps individuals articulate their thoughts with clarity and confidence.

Many believe aquamarine possesses calming and rejuvenating properties. In alternative healing practices, it is thought to reduce anxiety, encourage positive thinking, and aid in emotional balance. Some even claim that it promotes youthfulness and vitality, making it a favorite among those seeking both beauty and well-being.

Read the article at GeologyScience.com

Dan Hurd - Ocean Picture Stone

Wild Man Dan Hurd - Ocean Picture Stone

Come join us at our October meeting.
You all loved him before, and I'm bringing him back!

In the video I'll be showing, we'll follow Dan in his exploits with a $6500 gemstone rock.

Dan Hurd is mining and then cutting Ocean Picture Stone, a Blue Brecciated Chalcedony, which creates scenes that look like the ocean.

He's always entertaining. I think you'll like it!

Clubhouse Address:
3357 Susan Dr
Spring Hill, FL 34606

Jet Stone

Jet stone is an unusual stone. Used as lapidary material for millennia, it gets no respect in mineralogical circles. Among ten common rock and mineral guidebooks and field guides, seven don't even list jet stone in the index. The others? One has a picture with a one-sentence caption. Another offers only a brief paragraph.

What's up? Well, for one thing, jet isn't officially considered a mineral. A "mineraloid" is as generous as mineralogists allow. One even refers to it dismissively as simply "a rock." Read on, then join my dismay for those who malign such a storied stone.

Some call jet "Black Amber." Like amber (another plant-based organic gemstone), it is easy to work with because of its Mohs hardness ranging from 2.5 to 4.

While low on the hardness scale, jet stone is tough because of its fibrous microstructure. Fine-grained and compact, it takes such a glossy polish that in the days of old, it was used as a mirror. But it can also be buffed for a velvety matte finish. Its lightweight (specific gravity 1.30-1.35) makes it comfortable as earrings or necklaces, a comfort augmented by classy black.

These properties make jet a superb lapidary material. It can be cabbed, faceted or carved. Because it contains hydrocarbons, working with jet releases an oily odor, so good ventilation is recommended.

Geologically speaking, Whitby jet comes from fossilized wood in the Jurassic Jet Rock unit of the Mulgrave Shale Member of the Whitby Mudstone Formation. Chunks erode from coastal deposits, and the first jet worked in this area—preceding even the Romans—came from beach-combed pieces.

Such is its quality, Whitby jet is considered the gold standard. During Victoria's reign, Whitby boasted a full-scale jet industry. When demand fell, it fell with a thud. The industry enjoyed a boost when 1920s flappers sought ultra-long lightweight necklaces to grace their slender necks, but it never fully recovered, and jet substitutes—particularly newfangled plastics—further cut into demand for true jet.

Whenever anything becomes popular, cheap imitations follow.

Jet is a case in point. Look-alikes have been crafted from natural materials: anthracite, obsidian, onyx, and albertite (an asphalt derived from oil shales). More often, they've come from man-made materials: glass, ultra-vulcanized rubber (e.g., vulcanite, ebonite), gutta-percha, and the bane of modern life: plastics. While plastics are common today, glass substitutes were in vogue at the height of jet's popularity. These were called French jet or Vauxhall glass for cachet.

Simple tests reveal impostors. Black glass and onyx are heavier and are cold to the touch. Jet stone is warm. Jet has a brown streak if rubbed across a streak plate; however, vulcanite also leaves a brown streak. Jet takes a static electrical charge if rubbed with a cloth. Finally, some imitators, like albertite, don't achieve the high gloss of jet, while others, such as ebonite, fade over time.

Read the entire article at *RockNGem.com*

Our YouTube Channel and Club T-shirts

It has come to my attention that some of you do not know that our club has its own YouTube Channel.
On our channel, I have uploaded videos of past, and recent club presentations.
For those of you who could not make it the meeting when a particular presentation was done, or if you would like to see it again, this is where you can find those videos.
The web address for our Youtube channel is:
https://www.youtube.com/@withlacoocheerockhounds

Want to be the proud owner of some Withlacoochee Rockhounds merchandise? The club has short and long-sleeve shirts for sale. They are available in a wide range of colors and sizes. We also have a Rockhounds tote bag for carrying around those rock specimens you find.
Visit this page on our club's website to see the array of merchandise, and links to our them.
https://www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com/club-t-shirts-.html

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Ideas for posts to boost on the Facebook pages were discussed.
It was decided that any members who are going to be vendors at the Gem Show should bring items that they are going to sell to the October meeting for pictures to be taken and put on Facebook. If they have pictures already of the items they will sell, send them to Board Member Hunter Mellring for exposure and advertisement. We feel this will encourage more people to attend the show. Hunter also suggested that any club member that is involved with their local neighborhood social media groups should begin to post about our upcomingGem Show. These postings should begin in October and November.

A discussion was had about possibly sending out postcards to thank the vendors for attending after the Gem Show. No decision was made and this will be discussed further at the next Board Meeting.

A question arose about the endowment fund we send to USF every year, and it was decided that we would send the same amount that we have sent in recent years.
The meeting ended at 7:25pm.

Respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson

Field Trips

"Note: The Withlacoochee Rockhounds Club does not sponsor field trips other than trips that are sanctioned by the SFMS (The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies).

Our club insurance is through SFMS and does not cover excursions not listed on their website as safe."
The SFMS insurance covers the property owner where members might go, but not the club members.

Clubhouse Address:
3357 Susan Dr
Spring Hill, FL 34606

Monthly Meeting Courtesy

Our monthly meetings are a time for members to get together to share their love of rocks, minerals and fossils. It is a chance to learn from each other, teach each other and bond with people that have common interests. It's also a time for the club to conduct a business meeting, during which club Officers and Directors inform club members of changes that have happened or are proposed to happen in the future to club procedure or rules.
It is a time for announcements of coming classes, programs, scholarships, and special events.
It may be a time for discussion on a topic if it is of concern to a majority of members present.
Members may also share experiences and news of interest to other members.
Our monthly meetings should always be a time of sharing, education and entertainment.

We should all show respect and consideration for each other at our meetings, especially for the Facilitator of the meeting, whether it be our President or one of our other Officers. This respect has been lacking in our meetings for several months now. A few attendees have been speaking out without being recognized, shouting, and making inappropriate comments. This not only disrupts our meetings but makes members, new and old, feel uneasy and uncomfortable. It makes our club seem very unprofessional and is disrespectful to the Officers, Directors, and your fellow members.

Going forward, our Board has decided to strive for a more business-like atmosphere while our business meetings are in order. If you are an attending member and have a question or comment, please raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Facilitator of the meeting. After you are acknowledged and speak, if you later have something else to add, please raise your hand and again be recognized to speak. Please be respectful and polite when you are addressing the Officers and Directors, who volunteer their time, work tirelessly, and make every effort to keep this club alive and prosperous.

We feel this will make for a smoother meeting with all members being heard. No members will be shouted over and no members will feel over run with chaotic outbursts. We will all feel a part of the meeting and will learn more about what our club is doing for and with us.

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Our monthly club meeting is held at the Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Club, 3357 Susan Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34606, on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM

www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com

Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is $10.00 per month. Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

Advertisers Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the *Rock Talk* and our website. The club can use the monthly income. Both the *Rock Talk* and our website have more exposure than only club members

Contact club treasure Janet Wheeler: ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
or send to: Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Purpose

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earrth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, and workshops. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.
Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

Dues

Dues are $35.00 annually for adults, and $5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

Club Meeting Location and Time

Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3375 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

2025 Club Officers and Appointees

President	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com .com
Vice President	Anthony Maffatone	352.397.7694	anthonymaffatone@gmail.com
Secretary	Melodye Steverson	352.683.9496	melodye@designsbymelodye.com
Treasurer	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Rock Talk Editor	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Club Webmaster	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Mailing Reporter	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Audio/Visual Coordinator	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com

Michael Steverson (President) Anthony Maffatone (Vice President) Melodye Steverson (Secretary) Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
Hunter Mellring Leslie Newberry Roger Wheeler James Roush Ralph Barber (Past President)

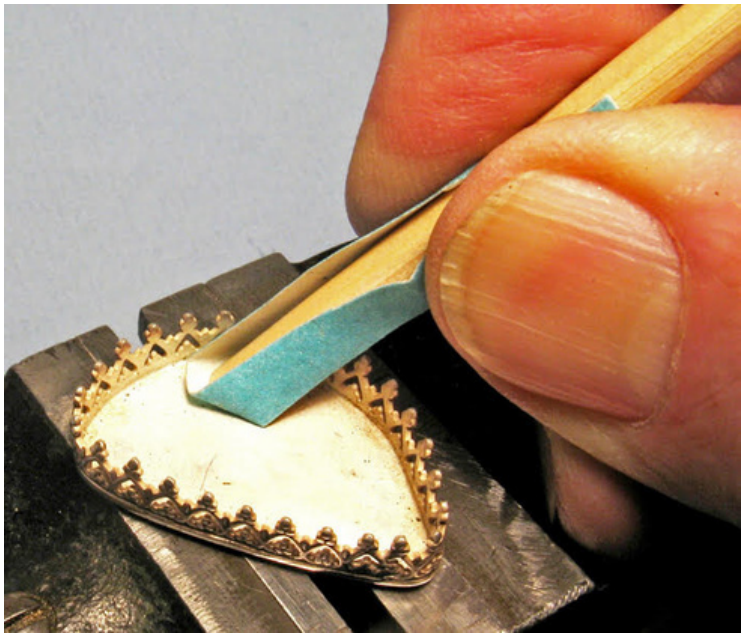
Bench Tips from Brad Smith

Brad Smith's *Bench Tips* are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

SANDING/POLISHING IN TIGHT PLACES

Often you'll need to sand or polish an area that's impossible to reach with even a small wheel on a flexshaft.
Other times it might be the bottom of a pocket or the inside-bottom corner of a box that needs to be finished.
One trick for these nit-picky jobs may be left over from your last Chinese dinner - a chopstick.

I've found quite a few uses for these in the shop.
Prepare the tip by simply sawing it off at a 45 degree angle.
Then apply whatever abrasive grit you will need for the job or hold a strip of sandpaper around the end.
Loose grit can be held onto the tip with a bit of vaseline or oil.
Tripoli or rouge can be just rubbed onto the end of the chopstick.



Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books
Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith

Rock Talk Funny Papers

From The Editor

Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

For our September meeting, we had the return of a club favorite - Rock Swap! Club members could buy, sell or trade rock-related items. Everyone had a great time. Lots of swapping, buying, selling and trading.

For our October meeting.....you liked him before, so I'm bringing him back. Prospector, rock hound extraordinaire, and a great video presence to boot, is back with another of his rockhounding videos. This time he's working a claim of Ocean Picture Stone, and a specimen worth $6500! This one takes us from finding the rock, mining it, to taking it back to his shop and sawing it. I think you'll like it. This one has rockhounding written all over it@

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you are still not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address, and that you are indeed subscribed.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

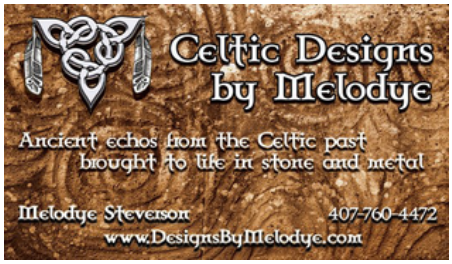
Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members

During the last several months, illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.
These are SCAMS.
Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monitary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.

Rockhounds Advertisers



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Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

If your ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

Advertisers Are Needed
Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.
The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.
Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.
Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com or send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Membership Form - 2025

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
Hernando County FL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name _____

Partner's Full Name _____
* If both applying for membership

Child's Full Name _____
* If under 18, and applying with parent

Street Address _____

City _____

State / ZIP _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Annual Membership Dues:

*Choose your type of membership

- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea

☐ Returning Member?

☐ New Member?

If you are applying, for example, as husband, wife and child (under 18), then fill in full name, partner's name and child's name above. Then, choose two individual memberships to the left, along with an under 18 membership.

Give this completed form, along with your check (made payable to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds") or credit card for dues to Club Secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or, you may mail the form to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634